

THE SPOILER SPOILED.

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A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES

OF NESHANOCK AND HOPEWELL,

*THURSDAY, JUNE 1st, 1865.*

BY

REV. J. C. BINGHAM.

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*MERCER:*

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*"Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled, and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee, when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled, and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee."*—ISAIAH, XXXIII: 1.

"I do not believe that the Bible is a revelation from God, and having read it carefully, I confess that I cannot tell where it came from."

Such is the recent confession of one whose landmarks were swept away by the tide of spurious religion which almost engulfed our country, and made a slave-holder's rebellion possible.

God is tearing up the foundations, alike of skepticism and fraudulent christianity, by writing the woes of the Bible in the history of proud oppressors, and by stretching out his arms in pity and deliverance to the poor. He has lifted the veil of mystery, and we look right down into the habitations of horrid cruelty.

We see the spoiler and the spoiled, the treacherous dealer, and those who have been treacherously dealt with. We have felt the relentless blows of the traitor's hand upon ourselves,—a hand made strong in its treason against humanity, by our encouragement and forbearance. We have been long acquainted with its spirit, but not until we felt its blows, did we know its accumulated power. The slave bowed beneath it, and we called him menial; we did him wrong, he needed a helping hand; God gave it to him, and he rose and helped to deliver us.

The history of slavery has ever been one of treason, fraud and barbarism. It has defrauded millions of liberty, light, property, family relations, everything on earth that is desirable. Its victims by millions lie buried and forgotten in the desolated fields, and in the swamps and wilderness of the South. In heroic endurance, in patient suffering, each hopeless generation passed away. Their chains were their only heirloom, parents lived to see them securely

fastened upon the limbs of their children, to bathe and rust them with their tears, then joyfully retired to rest in their humble graves.

Now and then a bold spirit like "Nat Turner," would strike and break himself against the iron sceptre of the mighty despot, but, "on the side of the oppressor there was power, and they had no comforter."

The yoke grew heavier with every effort that was made to break it, the taskmasters increased their burdens, flayed the weak or stubborn, as examples at the whipping post, burned the rebellious at the stake, chased the fugitives, and allowed them to be torn in pieces by blood-hounds, and the "Hunker" of olden times, the incipient Northern disloyalist of the present, exclaimed, "cease from your agitation, it only makes the slave's condition worse."

The same spirit, even in what were called peaceful days, mobbed and murdered hundreds of citizens who only presumed to question its rightfulness and authority. Long ago Lovejoy died a martyr, Richard Dillingham, an Ohio quaker, perished in a Mississippi prison, for daring to sympathize with the spoiled. Fairbanks in Kentucky, and Samuel Green in Maryland, were held fast prisoners until liberated by the progress of the war, because they loved humanity. It shed the blood of hundreds in Kansas, kidnapped her free citizens, and let them die in Missouri jails, endeavored to drive out every man who loved liberty, made it a capital crime to speak against slavery, strove to strike down the right of petition, and freedom of debate in the Congress of the United States, challenged to duel every man who dared to lift his voice against its presumptuous claims, made it a high crime to give a cup of cold water or a crust of bread to their fleeing victims, even in our own homes. It silenced most of the pulpits of our country, and endeavored to prostitute the word of God into its foul support.

The leading men of the rebellion received high salaries, and occupied eminent places in the government, while they were bending every effort of their lives for its overthrow. A solemn oath had no binding force upon the conscience of traitors. Why should a man shrink from the crime of perjury who makes light of the crime of treason? It was a little thing for them to rob the armory and treasury of the nation, scatter its vessels of war, conspire to take the President's life before he should reach the Capital, and openly attack the government in the hour of its supposed helplessness, for with their uplifted right hand they had sworn allegiance to its Constitution, while in their perjured hearts they were already planning how most effectually to destroy it.

When the war began there were traitors in every department of the government, all over the country great organizations were laboring for its overthrow, railroad bridges were burned, trains of cars laden with soldiers were thrown from the track, and masked batteries were erected almost in reach of the Capital.

*Secret*

As the war progressed wounded and helpless men were murdered on the battle field, ornaments were made of the bones of Union soldiers, left unburied where they fell, tens of thousands perished by starvation in Southern prisons, and last of all, when ruin stared them in the face, when their guilty cause was hopeless, they murdered the President, who in this hour of their extremity, as indeed, from the beginning, was the best friend they had on earth.

Thus the spoiler spoiled; thus the treacherous dealer dealt treacherously. For long years they spoiled with impunity, the rich and powerful were on their side, those who opposed them in wickedness were few, and feeble, and despised. Now they are scattered before God, they are driven away like smoke, as wax melteth before the fire, so do they perish from the presence of the Lord. Their sword is entered into their own flesh, and their bows are broken.

We have met to-day in accordance with the proclamation of our new President. It tells us that, "our country has become one great house of mourning, the head of the family being taken away." And in order to mitigate that grief on earth, which can only be assuaged by communication with the Father in Heaven, "This day is observed wherever in the United States the flag of the country is respected, as a day of humiliation and mourning," and we are called upon to "unite in solemn service to Almighty God, in memory of the good man who has been removed."

Mr. Lincoln was the President of the people. He removed the rubbish of aristocracy that had been gradually gathering around the Presidential office, and brought it back again to simple familiarity with the masses; working men wrote to him letters of encouragement, and received from him kind appreciative words in reply. His mode of thought and expression corresponded with theirs, and every sentence he uttered was at once understood. His strong, clear common sense made the gilding of rhetoric superfluous. With him, words were the representatives of ideas. Never did he "succeed in saying nothing" The art of deception was not his.

He had imbibed the political notions of the people, corrupted and prostituted by the influence of Slavery, as was the politics of the nation. The holding of slaves was by almost common consent, a constitutional right. The Fugitive Slave Act was constitutional. Whoever opposed either, or hinted that there is a higher law was a "sickly sentimentalist," and "impracticable theorist," or an impertinent meddler." Every officer bowed before this all-powerful, and relentless Moloch, and swore to protect its rights, and faithfully do its bidding.

There is an inexpressible sense of relief in the knowledge that all this is past. The Fugitive Slave Law is dead, and Slavery has ceased to exist under the old constitution, unamended.

Under the stern discipline of God's Providence, Abraham Lin-

coln was prepared in twenty months to do as great an act as man is ever permitted to do on earth. As the ruler of thirty millions of people, the chosen instrument of the God of nations, on the first day of January, eighteen hundred and sixty-three he proclaimed liberty throughout the land. Four millions of shackles were broken asunder on that day. Four millions of right hands were raised towards heaven in silent joy. Four millions of hearts too full for utterance, breathed out one prayer for blessings upon him whom God had led to speak those glorious words. On that day rebellion began to die. It has achieved no victory since. That arrow found its way to the heart of the Confederacy and drained its life-blood.

Abraham Lincoln needs no marble monument to perpetuate his fame. It will live in the household words of a race elevated by his word from among the beasts. First in huts little children are taught, in uncouth terms, to speak his praise. Hereafter, the children of those children, possessors of the soil, the riches, and refinement of the South, in mansions built by their own skill and energy, will weave his name in poetry, and in rich music of their own, sing the praise of their great deliverer. Glory to God who raised him up and enabled him to do his work so well.

President Lincoln was the friend of the soldiers. He felt and acted toward them like a father. It was remarked by one of his cabinet that he was scarcely fit to be intrusted with the pardoning power. He could hardly turn away from the application of a man, and the tears of a woman were sure to overcome him.

Carpenter, the Artist, narrates the following incident:

"A woman with a faded shawl and hood, somewhat advanced in life, was admitted in her turn to the President. Her husband and three sons, all she had in the world, enlisted. Her husband had been killed, and she had come to ask the President to release to her the eldest son. "Certainly, if her prop was taken away she was justly entitled to one of her boys." He immediately wrote an order for the discharge of the young man. The woman thanked him very gratefully, and went away. On reaching the army, she found that this son had been in a recent engagement, was wounded, and taken to a hospital. She found the hospital, but her boy was dead. The surgeon in charge made a memorandum of the facts on the back of the President's order, and almost broken hearted, the poor widow found her way again into his presence. He was much affected by her appearance and story, and said, "I know what you wish me to do now, and I shall do it without your asking. I shall release you, your second son." Upon this he took up his pen, and commenced writing the order. While he was writing the poor woman stood by his side, the tears running down her face, and passed her hand softly over his head, as a fond mother would do to a son. By the time he had finished writing his own heart and

eyes were full. He handed her the paper, "Now," said he, "You have one, and I one of the two left, that is no more than right." She took the paper, and reverently placing her hand again upon his head, the tears still upon her cheeks, said, 'The Lord keep and bless you Mr. President, may you live long to be the head of this great nation.'"

Mr. Lincoln lived to see the rebellion crushed, to enter its deserted capital, to receive the surrender of its greatest army, and to give the nation official intelligence of the great triumph. Then weary, but rejoicing he returned to his home, and talked of lenity to the baffled and conquered traitors. To relax his overworked mind he went to a place of amusement. There the hired assassin of rebellion awaited his coming. All the accomplices were procured, and the arrangements perfected through the influence of rebel gold. The assassin was well chosen. He knew the place, and under the influence of brandy, possessed, alas, too steady a hand. The ball went straight to the mark, and the good President passed in a moment from all sensibility to life.

It was the last masked battery of secession and rebellion, the final necessary blow to arouse the people to a clear sense of the crime of treason! Henry A. Wise said if Northern sympathy could be given up for execution, he would willingly let John Brown go. Alas! for him and his co-traitors, Northern sympathy perished by the same ball that killed the President. His wish is granted, and justice must finish the work.

President Lincoln's task was accomplished. God had no more need of his agency. His was the work of a conqueror and liberator. Through all the terrible years of his administration, his guiding star was mercy. It is wonderful how a man so tender, should at the same be so firm. God prepared him for his work, and took him away when it was done.

His own favorite hymn has its most illustrious example in himself:

"Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?  
Like a swift fleeting meteor, a fast flying cloud,  
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,  
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave.

"The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,  
Be scattered around, and together be laid;  
And the young and the old, and the low and the high  
Shall molder to dust, and together shall lie.

"'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath  
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,  
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud,  
Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?"

And now another hand is raised up to bear the sword of vengeance. Already it is addressing itself to the work. The spoiler has ceased to spoil, and is about to be spoiled. The treacherous dealer has made an end to deal treacherously, and the results of his treason fall upon his own pate.

While we contemplate the results of crime, let us not forget that, as a nation blinded and hardened in sin, we were saved from similar results only through the interposition of a long-suffering and merciful God. The gulf that yawns for traitors now, only a little while ago appeared as though it would swallow up the nation. God allowed us to look into its open jaws, to have a near view of its horrors, then drew us back again to a place of safety. It is the first fair view that the American people have ever had of ruin. One danger is past, but others are before us, and God has allowed them all to be clustered together in this great tragedy, that we may study them and be wise. "For when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

1st. Booth, the assassin, was a member of a secret, oath-bound organization, every member of which is a sworn and secret enemy of his country. He was chosen by his associates, because of his peculiar fitness, for this particular crime. Under the cloak of secrecy his purpose was so well hidden that no definite suspicion was excited, and no effective measures taken to prevent the perpetration of the crime.

Society can never be safe while secret, oath-bound organizations are tolerated. Every citizen who does not choose to become a member is in their power. He may be injured in property, reputation or life, without knowing whence the injury came. Of course these organizations are more dangerous when society in general is demoralized, but they are never safe. Oaths of secrecy and recognition by signs and grips, especially in a country where freedom of speech is guaranteed, is *prima facie* evidence of guilty designs. Every oath-bound secret organization is a conspiracy. The Free Mason swears to assist and defend his brother Mason under all circumstances, whether innocent or guilty, and then he joins in a conspiracy against the laws of the state. He swears to defend his brother Mason, innocent or guilty, whoever else may suffer, and thus conspires against society at large. Should a member reveal any of their secrets, the whole Order conspires to take his life. Thus, instead of being a benevolent society, ministering to the wants of humanity, it is a wholesale conspiracy against the rights and interests of mankind.

The Know Nothings conspired against the rights of all naturalized citizens, and all who wished to become such. The deeds of darkness committed in Kansas, by the hordes sent out from the Blue Lodges of Missouri, were only additional illustrations of the spirit that seeks shelter in secrecy.



But we can never fully appreciate the sinfulness of a secret conspiracy until we are conspired against. As long as the victims are Irishmen, Dutchmen, and Negroes, no matter! But when the dagger is ready to enter our own hearts, we get new light upon the subject. Should not the loyal people of the United States awake to the criminality of secret plots and conspiracies, upon this day, when the whole nation mourns the loss of its greatest President, a victim of secret, oath-bound conspiracy?

Not one of the brothers of the assassin Booth could appear in society, until he had vindicated his loyalty. Why not have every brother, of every secret, oath-bound organization, show why he has taken such an oath, and what his purposes are, at least once a year? Instead of this, large bodies of men—many of them, no doubt, loyal to their country—bound together by oaths that other men would scarcely dare to utter, recognizing each other by grips and signs and pass words, marched in the different funeral processions, as the remains of the President were borne through the country to their last resting place. Did a blush of shame mantle the cheeks of any of them, when they remembered that Booth was a faithful brother, and according to the code of laws that governs all such bodies, he only did his duty in carrying out the will of a majority of the fraternity?

No doubt Booth's faltering heart—if indeed it ever faltered—was encouraged by the reflection that his frightful crime was shared by every member of the body, that while he took much of the risk, the responsibility would rest equally upon all. No single man could bear alone the burden that must have rested upon him for months before he committed the fearful act. He cast it over on to his brethren by times, and thus relieved himself.

When Masons and Odd-fellows condemn the Knights of the Golden Circle, they forget that the Inquisition, Jesuitism, Masonry, Odd-fellows, and Knights of the Circle, all belong to the same great family of conspirators against human rights, and all, in the main must exercise a kind, brotherly feeling toward each other. This, then, is one of the dangers against which, in this terrible tragedy, God warns us. He sets it in bold relief before the face of this nation, and plainly says, "Children beware! One danger is past, but here is another. I have delivered you once, tempt me not again to destroy you." If we will not listen to his voice, at some future day his judgments will meet us again, and again in anguish we shall bemoan our folly. "When his judgments are in the earth, let the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.

2d. Booth resorted to brandy before committing the terrible deed. Of course he did; every criminal does. During the day of the tragedy he appeared agitated and pale. About to write a note, he asked the clerk of the hotel, "What year is this?" saying that he had forgotten. He needed something to steady his nerves; neither the golden bribe, the expectations of his

accomplices, nor his solemn oath was sufficient. What a miserable wretch he must have been all that day. He was actively engaged in keeping his awful secret. That was enough for one soul. Yet he must perfect his plans, and attend to all the little details to insure their success and his own escape. He must meet and quiet all the misgivings of his own heart, shake off the terrible fear that, in spite of him, would steal into his soul, and try to appear calm, however fiercely the storm rages within. His sensibility is too keen. If the time arrives while he is in that condition he will fail. Just before the fatal moment he entered a drinking saloon and called for brandy, and very soon he is "master of the situation." His sensibility is blunted, and the demon in his heart aroused. Both were essential to success, and brandy effected both. His nerves are steadied, he can take sure aim; the crime does not seem half so great, all danger is vanished. He feels like a hero; he will rid the earth of a tyrant, and thus immortalize his name—and so our good President died.

Brandy is one of Satan's master pieces. It never fails, when used, to advance his cause. The Southern Confederacy has been supported and made strong by brandy, ever since the day of its inception. Under its influence Southern representatives talked treason in Congress. Under its influence states seceded, armies were marshaled, marched to the battle field, and fought like demons. Guerrillas scoured the country robbing and murdering, alike, friends and foes.

The Union cause suffered the loss of a number of battles during the war, because officers were drunk, and now that the war is almost over, what havoc we see all through our country from the use of intoxicating drinks. Satan is wielding this weapon unopposed. While his sceptre as an oppressor is broken, he is fortifying himself and preparing to gather into his kingdom a rich harvest of drunkards.

Drinking saloons are established on every hand to entice our sons to ruin. All agitation has ceased, and the young go unwarned into these haunts of death. Not one of them comes away pure as he entered, while many will return again and again, until woe and sorrow, and contentions and babbling, and wounds without cause, and redness of eyes, will be their heritage in life, and after death it "biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." We have also this warning in the tragical death of the President. If you would be a happy and peaceful nation, tear down your distilleries, shut up your dram shops, and banish all intoxicating drinks. Let not a generation of drunkards succeed a generation of heroes. Oppression is no more fatal to the prosperity and peace, than intemperance. Are the people not prepared for this? Well, are they prepared for all the results of the opposite course? We understand now, practically, God's method of dealing with national sin. He gives abundant light, numerous and startling warnings,

offers to the people for a time the opportunity and honor of voluntarily putting it away, and when they finally decline the work, and are becoming wedded to their sin, he suddenly draws the sword of vengeance, and cuts it up by the roots. It is a terrible ordeal as we have reason to know, and many a nation has died under the operation. Let us not tempt God in this matter, lest he tear in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

3d. Booth was an actor of tragedy. His life-long training fitted him for becoming a graceful and successful murderer. Great criminals were his models; he had studied their lives, their guilty schemes, their attitude in the commission of crime, until in the mimicry of the stage, he had become accomplished. To him crime had lost much of its repulsiveness. He had only contemplated it from the side of romance. His familiarity with all these things, and his perverted feelings made his task comparatively easy. Thus brandy, secrecy, and the stage conspired with the spirit of despotism to kill the President. In his person and office they recognized a friend of liberty and order, and to each of them, a common foe. Have they not all exposed themselves to condemnation and to destruction? Are they not allies of the destroyer, themselves to be destroyed? Shall we finish them now or wait till each in its turn has grown strong and attempted the life of the nation? These are the sins that christians must meet and grapple with, in the immediate future. They present a bold proud front, even now, although fresh stains of blood are on their hands, and the mark of the murderer on their forehead.

With devilish foresight and cunning, they have taken shelter just as slavery did, under the wing of the church, and large denominational influence is already pledged to their support. This is especially true of secret oath-bound organizations. Whoever attacks them attacks the great body of professing christians in the country. Surely their true character should now be understood, and all countenance of the professed people of God be withdrawn from them.

We may take courage, now that we have reached the end of the great and long continued struggle for human rights. A bad cause can never be supported by bad arguments. If ever the Devil exhausted his armory in defence of any cause, he did it in the defence of American Slavery. Statesmen developed all their ingenuity in producing plausible arguments in its behalf. For years, no man was recognized as a statesman until he had invented some ingenious lie in the interest of oppression. John C. Calhoun, to meet that glorious sentiment of the Declaration of Independence, "All men are created equal," once declared that "men are not created, infants are created, *men grow*." A saying worthy of the great master of Jeff Davis.

Senator Pettit, of Indiana, pronounced the Declaration of Independence a "self-evident lie." "All men," said he, "are not created

equal; some are taller than others, some are stronger than others, and some are more talented than others."

Daniel Webster, in the defense of the Fugitive Slave Act, said, "that the Higher Law is beyond the reach of man, higher than the Blue Ridge, higher than the Allegheny mountains, too high for man to obey it." Even Senator Trumbull once declared that he did not call slave-holding a crime, where it is legalized by State enactment,

I have heard of a county politician who, in a harangue to his neighbors during a political campaign, declared that Henry Clay did not own a single slave; "to be sure," he added, "*he has a few domestics.*" Of course his unschooled auditors did not know that in Southern phraseology, a domestic is a slave. That politician deserved promotion that he never received for his ingenious lie.

Ministers joined in the dishonorable and unholy work, and the Bible was searched over and over again, for passages and arguments in defence of slavery. "Cursed be Canaan," was hobbyized, and ridden almost to death. "The heathen round about" were made to furnish Israel slaves *in perpetuum*. Genesis was searched to see if God had not made the white man and the black man at two different creations, and of different kinds of clay. God was said to have organized his church in the family of Abraham, while that patriarch was the owner of hundreds of slaves. Onesimus ran away from his master and owner Philemon, Paul captured him and sent him back.

These were the arguments of statesmen and divines, repeated and reiterated by men of smaller calibre. Their calling has slipped away from them. Their disciples through fear of being left on the unpopular side, have almost all deserted them, they are falling into neglect. Occasionally, a few of their more steadfast friends meet together in some corner to talk over the good times past, and administer to each other the few consolations of their expiring system of religion. Soon these relics will depart, and their place of burial will be among the ruins of intolerant bigotry. The world will be relieved when they are gone. Their history is within the book of God's remembrance, who doeth all things well.

There was another class of men, and another class of arguments. The "roughs," who cared for neither gospel nor politics, but who most cordially hated the negro. They used abusive epithets, and when these failed, they resorted to the bludgeon, tar and feathers, suspicious eggs, and sharp-edged rails. In later days they have tried torpedoes, poison, yellow fever and assassination. All these arguments have been thoroughly tried and have most ignominiously failed. Satan is at his wits-end. There is nothing left for his poor Confederacy, with its peculiar institution, but unwept and inglorious death, and the burial of an ass.

If Satan, with the allies he possessed, could not sustain the system of American Slavery, what bad cause can he sustain when the

artillery of God's truth is fairly turned upon it? In this overwhelming defeat his prestige is lost, truth and righteousness are triumphant, and may confidently equip themselves for another battle. We have also this new illustration of the truth, that the "way of the transgressor is hard." Brooks, Keitt, Butler, Tyler and Floyd have gone to answer for their crimes at a higher tribunal than any on earth. Mason and Slidell are in exile, never more to return to their native country. Davis, Stephens, Reagan and Clay are close prisoners at Fortress Monroe, awaiting their trial and doom. Saunders, Thompson, Tucker and Cleary are fugitives and vagabonds, the marks of the murderer upon their brow, and a price upon their heads. The accomplices of Booth are on trial for their lives. From the time that he shot the President he had not a moment's peace or comfort. He went from the stage with a broken leg, and physical as well as mental agony attended him to the hour of his death.

Poverty, desolation and sorrow reign throughout the South. The highborn ladies, who lived to luxuriate on the products of the unpaid toil of others, now in common with the plebeians and mudsills whom they despised, are destined to eat bread in the sweat of their face, until they return to the ground from which they were taken. Governors of States, Legislators and proud military officers, are by scores and hundreds, homeless and friendless beggars. The poorest slave in all the States, has a better prospect for himself and his posterity, than the man who a few months ago, claimed him as his chattel. There is not a happy rebel in the land, and not one that will ever be happy and contented again on earth.

If ever the windows of heaven were opened to pour a storm of wrath upon Confederate wickedness, it has been so in the closing days of the rebellion. It is not the province of the reformer to fight dead sins. The main work in this great reformation is finished. The questions yet at issue will reach a just solution by the impetus they have already received. The books and speeches and sermons that this great contest has produced, may be given to history, or laid aside—as the warrior lays his sword aside—mementoes of the past. The angel who bears the key of the bottomless pit, may gather the broken fetters that have fallen from the limbs of four millions of American slaves, and from them forge the wondrous chain with which the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and satan, shall be bound for a thousand years; cast into the bottomless pit, and shut up, and a seal set upon him, he shall deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years are fulfilled.

Blessed period of good will and peace on earth. Nations shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and shall learn war no more. Let us wait with patience this glorious day of promise, and in the meantime, let us meet with renewed energy and confidence the foes that are yet to be overcome.

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